

## An Update on Steve Croman

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*By Joseph Turco, Esq.*

In my September 2017 *WestView* article, “Landlord of the Flies: Steve Croman’s Social Diary is Empty,” I wrote that ‘The Madoff of Landlords,’ Steve Croman, had lost his famed lawyer Ben Brafman over a fee dispute. A few days after publication, I received a call from the Stop Croman Coalition advising me that I was wrong. Brafman had attended the September sentencing of Croman, which Judge Konviser postponed so that the suddenly observant Croman could celebrate the Jewish New Year.

Yes, religion is often the last refuge of a scoundrel. As for my alleged mistake about Brafman, I plead ‘Not Guilty.’ Readers of *WestView* and members of the Stop Croman Coalition will recall that when Attorney General (AG) Schneiderman held his first press conference on the Croman matter, he stated that his office would bring both a criminal case and a civil case. In response, Croman hired the diminutive lawyer with the giant reputation, Ben Brafman, to handle both cases. My sources confirmed that Brafman had demanded one cool million and actually received a good portion of it. You will also recall that, in his public statements, Brafman announced that he was seeking what he called “a global settlement” to resolve both cases. Well, the AG was having none of that, and as we all know, the criminal case resolved with a year in jail and a \$5 million fine.

That pesky civil case, however, is still alive and well and will continue to dog Croman for some time. It is now conventional wisdom that, given the long slog ahead of them, Croman and Brafman could not agree on the fee going forward and that Brafman will no longer appear for Croman in the civil case. The bottom line is that Schneiderman’s efforts to obtain damages in civil court weigh heavily on the convicted felon and that Brafman only stayed on until the sentencing phase of the criminal case.